Problems regarding rail bridges

2498. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the article captioned, "the thing about bridges—some are distressed and other distressing", which appeared in The Indian Express, dated the 7th October, 2002;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) what steps are proposed to be taken to address various problems and bottlenecks mentioned in the news article, for improving the condition of rail bridges and their safety?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) All the Railway bridges are inspected as per laid down schedule in codes and manuals. Prioritisation of distressed bridges and other bridges has been planned for rehabilitation/rebuilding as per condition basis arising out of scheduled inspections. Various Committees' recommendations in the past are taken into account while planning and execution of bridge works. Rs. 1530 crores is allotted under Special Railway Safety Fund for repairs/rebuilding of bridge works to be completed in a span of five years upto 2005-06. Bridge works to be taken up under Special Railway Safety Fund has been identified and planned/sanctioned for execution and placed in Railways Works, Machinery and Rolling Stock Programme Part II and III for 2002-03. These works are in various stages of planning and execution.

Ticketless rail travel by Rallyists

2499. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that special trains and additional coaches were provided at Lucknow, for the use of persons who attended BSP's Dhikkar rally, to enable them to go back to their places;

(b) whether these people were allowed to travel without tickets;

(c) if so, the loss of revenue suffered by the Railways on this account;

(d) whether Government propose to claim charges from the organizers of the rally; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor and what are the policy guidelines of Railways for the ticketless travellers for attending political rallies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA): (a) Yes, Sir. To clear the extra rush of traffic on 29.9.2002, 12 special trains were run and 23 extra coaches were attached with the regular train services.

(b) to (e) Railways did not allow people to travel without tickets. Ticketless travellers, when apprehended, are penalised as per relevant rules. However, in case of very heavy rush of passengers at times of melas and rallies, it becomes extremely difficult for the Railways, with their limited strength of ticket checking staff & RPF personnel, to effectively check the entry of unauthorized passengers, both in trains and at station premises despite their best efforts. Such situations may lead to law and order problems, which can be tackled with the State Government's assistance only.

Unreserved train coaches

†2500. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the total number of general category, unreserved coaches, in trains going beyond 500 kms., never exceeds four;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that there is no space for standing even in the unreserved coaches due to the increasing number of passengers day-by-day and bribe is also taken forcibly at the railway stations, to get into them; and

(d) if so, what action is being taken/is likely to be taken in this regard?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.